DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 400 239 SP 036 961

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TITLE Cognitive Changes in the Course of Culture Contacts: Young Teachers Meet Migrant Youth.
INSTITUTION German Inst. for International Educational Research, Frankfurt (Germany).
PUB DATE Aug 96
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (14th, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, August 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Change; *Beginning Teachers; *Cognitive Restructuring; Conflict Resolution; Critical Incidents Method; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Culture Contact; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Immigrants; Minority Group Children; Multicultural Education; *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Germany

ABSTRACT

Handling of acculturation problems in multicultural classrooms requires the analysis of individual cognitive models of the process of cultural contacts. Culture contact is defined as individually oriented persons meeting socially oriented persons. Acculturation problems have no definite solutions, but through reconstruction of the pieces of knowledge involved the experiences of people undergoing cultural contact and conflict can be analyzed. Cognitive models can then be developed that serve as a didactic model for teaching how to handle these conflicts. A sample of 700 students, 50 percent with migrant family background, was used to characterize attitudinal differences among students. Twenty beginning teachers in multicultural schools with 30 percent migrant enrollment each moderated a group of 8 students selected according to their individual or social orientation with respect to family context and their parents' cultures of origin. A critical incident technique was used along with observation of conflict resolution. Findings showed that long-held beliefs are persistent and tend to reinforce avoidance of cross-cultural contacts, and that even with positive intervention, underlying figurative schemata are restructured in only a minority of instances. (JLS)

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COGNITIVE CHANGES IN THE COURSE OF CULTURE CONTACTS: YOUNG TEACHERS MEET MIGRANT YOUTH

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This work is based on the research carried out by Dorothea Bender-Szymanski, Kerstin Göbel, Brigitte Händel-Mattes, Hermann-Günter Hesse, Barbara Lueken and Andreas Thiele. The project is supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

Presented at the 14th Biennial Conference of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, held August 1996 in Québec City, Canada.

SP 036 961

The handling of acculturation problems in the multicultural classroom requires the analysis of implicit individual cognitive models during the course of culture contacts

Acculturation problems are open ones, because they have no definite solutions. Hence it is not possible to deduce the structure of the acculturation task from some inherent logical structure. Rather we have to analyze the experiences of people undergoing cultural contact. By way of reconstructing the pieces of knowledge involved, cognitive models of acculturation can be developed which could eventually serve as a basis for didactical models for the teaching of how to handle cultural conflicts.

Culture contact is defined as:
Individually oriented persons meet socially oriented persons.

Individual and social orientations are operationalized by the INDCOL-Scale (Triandis & Hui). The answers from about 700 students, 50 % of them with migrant family background lead to two clearly separable factorial dimensions:

Alpha Factor Analysis
N: 739; mean age: 16,6; SD: 1,6

Coefficient Alpha for each factor:

FACTOR1	FACTOR2
0.959163	0.89116

Rotated Factor Pattern

FACTOR1	FACTOR2	
0.56279	-0.11726	indiv. oriented achiev. motivation
0.48002	-0.17809	indiv. oriented achiev. motivation
0.41151	-0.06318	autonomy
0.40984	0.05491	assertiveness
0.38993	0.03340	assertiveness
0.38330	-0.16949	autonomy
0.37497	0.06779	emphasis on principle: self
0.31977	0.27289	assertiveness
0.25838	-0.00360	emphasis on principle: self
0.24300	0.10907	indiv. oriented achiev. motivation
-0.24766	0.57159	family inter-relatedness
-0.09606	0.56196	family inter-relatedness
0.15892	0.43894	emphasis on principle: family
0.12967	0.40850	emphasis on principle: family
-0.25065	0.26085	succorance
-0.02951	0.25481	family oriented achiev. motivation

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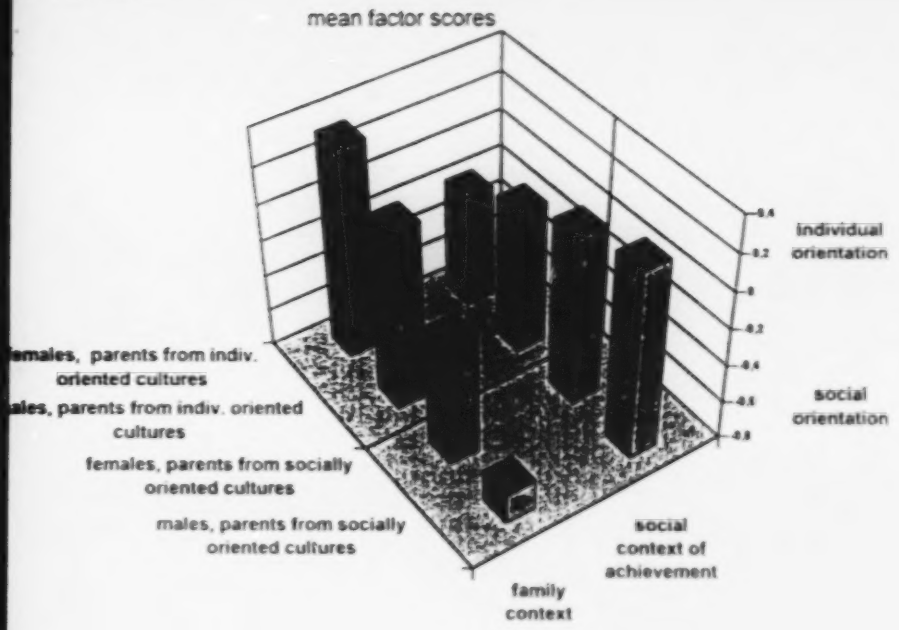

mean factor scores
individual orientation
social orientation
social context of achievement
family context
females, parents from indiv. oriented cultures
males, parents from indiv. oriented cultures
females, parents from socially oriented cultures
males, parents from socially oriented cultures

Legend

- ***individually oriented persons***: persons with high family-context factor scores
- ***socially oriented persons***: persons with low family-context factor scores
- ***individually oriented cultures***: cultures, whith Individualism/Collectivism scores equal or above the German value (according to HOFSTEDE)
- ***socially oriented cultures***: cultures, whith Individualism/Collectivism scores below the German value (according to HOFSTEDE)

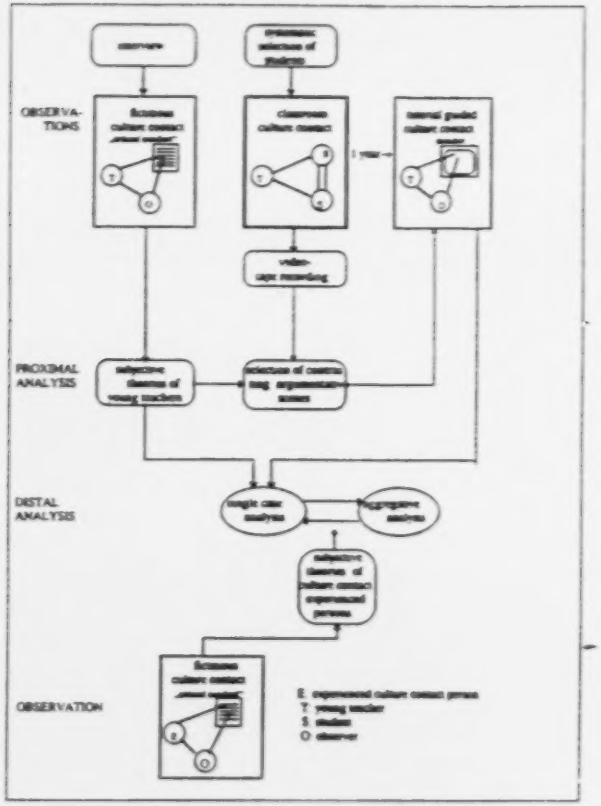
The gender x parental culture x context of orientation diagram of factor scores appear as stairs leading in opposite directions. The answers to the family context items are as expected. Students with parents from socially oriented cultures are themselves more socially oriented than students with parents from individually oriented cultures, female adolescents being more individually oriented than male students. Within the domain of the social context of achievement items adolescents show contrasting results: Students from socially oriented cultural backgrounds demonstrate more individual orientation than those from individually oriented backgrounds, female students being more socially oriented than male students.

In the context of Frankfurt am Main in Germany individual and social orientations of adolescents are domain specific depending on the family context or the social context of achievement.

The design was constructed to enable an analysis of cognitive changes which may occur when individually oriented persons meet socially oriented persons.

The verbal data are analyzed by means of a hierarchical and stepwise concentration. It is realized technically by utilizing of a data bank system.

Design



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Study of the initial subjective theories of beginning teachers

Subjects and Method

20 monocultural German beginning teachers from the larger area around the city of Frankfurt on Main were recruited as subjects.

They enter cultural contact when they start to teach in multicultural school classes, which in the case of Frankfurt on Main are classes with an average of about 30 % non-German pupils. German teachers in fact are rarely trained in a specific manner to cope with multiethnic topics. There is a high probability that teachers will rely on their implicit cognitive models about acculturation when they are challenged to cope with members of other ethnic groups. In changing their implicit cognitive models they are not affected by knowledge of research and as a result have to rely on own cross-cultural experiences.

Critical incident:

The subjects first read a story which ends in a dilemma. One protagonist from an individually oriented culture and another from a socially oriented culture interact in ways which correspond to their cultures of origin but are dysfunctional to the culture of the partner. A third protagonist who probably has cross-cultural experience serves as a possible anchor of ideas for conflict-resolution.

By putting themselves in the protagonists' situation through their imagination the subjects experience an occasion of fictitious cultural contact. The subjects are interviewed about their views on the causes, the probable and the ideal solutions of the dilemma situation. Subsequently the subjects are led to focus on their own experiences in cross-cultural encounters by the interviewer.

Results of the subjective theories of beginning teachers on acculturation

- beginning teachers are highly motivated to explain their own views and actions to enlighten others,
- highly value not shying away from controversial debates when they feel violated in their personal basic values or needs,
- mean that open, direct and revealing encounters in joint meetings of all parties lead to cathartic effects, so that the own position can be understood and accepted by the opposing person.
- mean that clarifying talks are correct, necessary and effective although all of them know about other - allocentric - strategies and goals of conflict resolutions, which they regard as manifestations of authoritarian social structures, as dishonest and non-efficient,
- mean that the correct strategies for proper conflict resolutions can be looked upon as culture free and universal.
- mean that the cultural dilemma by necessity ends up in a deep conflict with little likelihood for a real resolution, the best that could happen is some mutual understanding.

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Subjects and method

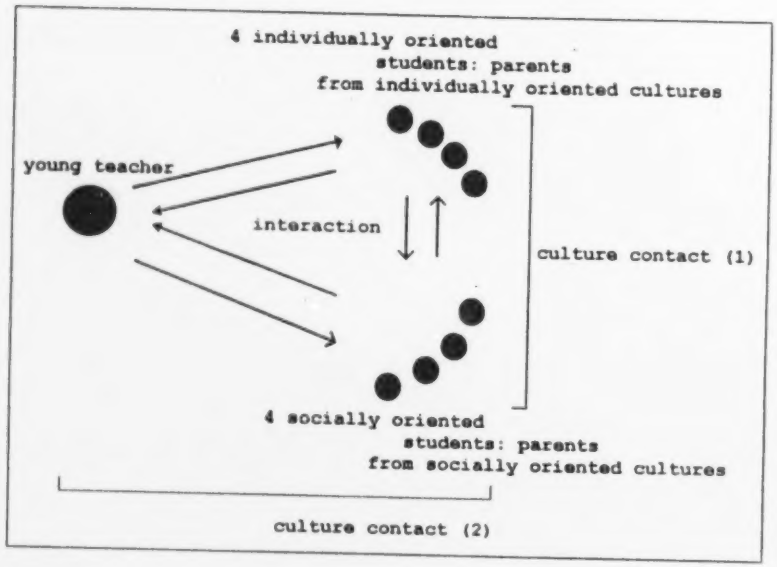
20 groups of 8 students (mean age 16,6) were selected according to their individual or social orientation with respect to the family context as well as their parents' culture of origin.

Cultural contact is observed with regard to two aspects:

(1) beginning teachers perceive and moderate the debate among the students

(2) beginning teachers act and *react* to the debate between individually and socially oriented students.

The videotaped group discussion were jointly evaluated by each novice and the researcher during a separate meeting.



Results of arranged classroom culture contacts: **Sequence of group dynamics**

(1) Cooperative conversation without visible signs of social conflict, basic homogeneity of arguments is presumed by all participants.

(2) Discovery of misunderstandings, same concepts are used differently, feeling of talking at cross-purposes.

(3) Emergence of social conflict, formation of two parties, sometimes a third party tries to reconcile them.

(4) Each of the parties attempts to explain its position sometimes in a preaching tone, and tries to unmask the other position as violating some superior value. All are surprised at the vehemence of the debate.

Results of arranged classroom culture contacts: **Interventions of beginning teachers**

- first question the arguments which are contrary to their own.
- When they notice the socially oriented student's certainty of arguments they become more reserved.
- In the course of the debate most beginning teachers shift from an active leader to a passive listener.
- Efforts to control the interactions in order to contribute to the conflict resolution were rare.
- When asked after the end of the discussion, the teachers answer that they were surprised about the stringent argumentation, although they were acquainted with culturally different views.
- Their preferred conflict resolving method of open and direct talks fails in having any influence on the beliefs of the discussants.

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Study of arranged classroom culture contact

Results of arranged classroom culture contacts: **Cultural views of participants**

- are robust and are spontaneously expressed with highly emotional certainty.
- The other position is explained on a deficit basis in so far as different conceptions of family and classmates are concerned.

Results of arranged classroom culture contacts: **Sequence of group dynamics**

(1) Cooperative conversation without visible signs of social conflict, basic homogeneity of arguments is presumed by all participants.

(2) Discovery of misunderstandings, same concepts are used differently, feeling of talking at cross-purposes.

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Misunderstandings because of false consensus

Connotations of cultural concepts are implicit, not reflected upon. The explicit use of the same words can implicitly have different meanings for different culturally oriented persons and can therefore lead to unnoticed misunderstandings.

Example: Personal independence

individually oriented persons:

Personal independence is highly valued with respect to one's own family but not with regard to classmates or colleagues.

socially oriented persons:

Personal independence is highly valued with respect to classmates or colleagues but not with regard to one's own family.

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Misunderstandings because of false dissension

Facts about cultural differences are well known. There is dissension about the meanings of cultural concepts. Statements of persons with divergent cultural orientations are understood in a different way and explicitly criticized. Deviating arguments are implicitly interpreted on the basis of one's own cultural context. The others' cultural contexts are not taken into consideration.

Example: personal autonomy

comments of individually oriented persons:

any social relationship has to be rejected if not chosen by oneself; attachments have to be rooted in freewill; personal goals have to harmonize with superior societal obligations; willingness to cooperate with the group if is personally respected.

comments of socially oriented persons:

if there is no harmony with the family one is egoistic, a product of laisser faire education; overevaluation of autonomy leads to a society without humanity and respect.

Example: strong family inter-dependency

comments of individually oriented persons:

social bargaining relationship, demanding, authoritarian, patriarchal, constraining, uncritical, no open exchange of personal views.

comments of socially oriented persons:

acceping parents goes without saying; strong attachments are formed by habituation; parental control is an expression of loving care.

Study of tutorials guiding culture contact

Method of the tutorials guiding cultural contact

The subjective theories of beginning teachers were reconstructed on the basis of the first meeting with them. Teachers were confronted with views that are in contrast to those previously experienced in arranged classroom debates. This was done with the aid of videorecordings. The tutor tried to find out whether the teacher is able to encode alternative views and to co-construct acculturative changes.

Study of unguided experience of culture contact by teaching in the multicultural classroom

Results: At the end of one year of real cross-cultural contact by teaching in multicultural classes

- the views of the beginning teachers changed.
- The core of their cognitive models stayed as it was. Their strategy to resolve conflicts are direct, open and revealing talks, which remain the only method of proper conflict resolution,
- but their beliefs in the applicability of this strategy in culture conflict situations decreased.
- Now they add conditions which filter out those few cases, in which discussions could be useful.
- One of the conditions which is seen as impeding the effectiveness of discussions is the rigid sozialization of the conflict partner, which results in a lack of motivation to strive for personal autonomy.
- The data suggest that the only group regarded as ready for cultural adaptation is one similar to the group to which the beginning teachers belong themselves. They no longer believe in the resolution of cultural conflicts, if students of foreign cultural backgrounds are not ready and willing to assimilate to the main culture.
- There are signs of helplessness and resignation with respect to the problems in multicultural classes which may be the result of the failure of the original ideas of the beginning teachers on how to solve those problems.

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Results of the tutorials guiding cultural contact

(1) Individuals are only vaguely aware of the cultural embedment of arguments and these are only available to introspection with difficulty.

2) The nuclei of figurative schemata show a strong tendency to persevere. New information is extracted from its context and reorganized and subsumed into existing figurative schemata. The nuclei are strengthened and emotionally loaded.

(3) The overall complexity of schemata is increased by the addition of conditions which legitimate the avoidance of undesired cultural contacts.

(4) There are only a few cases of accommodative cognitive changes achieved by restructuring figurative schemata to establish cognitive coexistence.

Conclusion

Cognitive change is manifested by the increase of the complexity of figurative schemata with respect to the cultural embedment of conflicts. The increase in complexity is accounted for by the addition of conditions which legitimate the avoidance of undesired cultural contacts. The nuclei of figurative schemata persevere. Accommodative changes only occur in tutorials guiding cultural contact situations.

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